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TO AMERICA
BEFORE STEAMSHIPS
by
JOSEPH BIGGS

THE VILLAGE PRESS



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TO AMERICA IN
THIRTY-NINE DAYS

BEFORE STEAMSHIPS
CROSSED THE ATLANTIC

BY

JOSEPH BIGGS
(1809-1895)

THE VILLAGE PRESS
IDBURY, KINGHAM, OXON

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P U B L I S H E R S ' N O T E

These extracts from a Diary by the late Joseph Biggs, of Leicester and London, are printed in memoriam by his only surviving daughter, Maude Ashurst Biggs, author of "Konrad Wallenrod" and "Master Thaddeus" (versions of the Poems of Mickiewicz), "Polish Fairy Tales," etc.

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TO AMERICA IN THIRTY-NINE DAYS

THE commercial difficulties of the year 1836-7 and the failure of one of our correspondents in the United States having rendered it necessary to go there, I sailed from Liverpool in the packet ship *Independence*, Captain Nye, early in May, 1837.

The ship being crowded, I obtained a passage with much difficulty, and was obliged to content myself with a hammock "between decks" (a sort of lobby or vestibule to the great cabin).

As the wind was adverse to getting out of the Channel, our ship was taken in tow by a steamer going to Glasgow.* Soon we were on the north of Ireland, and then steered off into the Atlantic.

*

The sailors are strange to each other, like new domestics in a house ; stores are lying about ; ropes, tackle, cordage, sails, passengers' luggage, and pigs strew the decks ; the Captain swears at the mates, as the mates swear at the men. However, in a few days, everything is settled down into regularity.

The principal distresses are the perpetual, wearisome monotony of the sea and the sky, the close, stifling air of the ship's cabin, which from the closed windows and hatches, is rendered almost unendurable in stormy weather, the sickly and dirty sea cookery, and the unpleasantness at first of Black servants.

I find it difficult to read anything better than a few novels, and the time is passed principally in sleeping, eating, and playing at chess, cards and shuffle-board ; the meals are frequent and prolonged, and there is a profusion of provisions, wines, and spirits.

There are upwards of 50 cabin passengers. Several are European partners of American Houses—many are Americans returning to wind up their bankrupt concerns in New York. Some few, very few, are nice agreeable people ; by far the greater part are close, morose, and

* No steamship had as yet crossed the Atlantic.

disagreeable. There are a few ladies, as yet almost invisible on account of sea-sickness.

For the last few days we have had a very odd dinner table, generally at a considerable angle, dishes sliding about, bottles falling down, and the joints and fowls leaping out of the dishes into the carvers' laps.

June 8-10.—I am surprised to see the immense flocks of birds sleeping on the water 1,000 miles from Land. We see every day numbers of whales, and shoals of grampus and porpoises. As the air grows warmer we see sharks.

*

We have overtaken the French packet from Havre which sailed a week before us. Our Captain congratulates himself on having made an unusually quick passage, which he attributes to his judgment in coming round the north of Ireland instead of the south.

We cast anchor, after a passage of 39 days, and I landed, and went to the City Hotel, Broadway.

It is a delightful sensation to tread firm ground. New York is delightful after a long voyage. The atmosphere above it is *so clear*, the houses are *so white* or so vividly coloured, and the trees which line the streets *so green*. There is an absence of that cloud of smoke which canopies most of our English towns.

New York looks in all respects like a foreign city, and it is almost with a feeling of surprise that I find people speaking English. It is intensely hot, the sun shines down most luridly, and the trees which line each side of the wide street, Broadway, are grateful to the sight and feeling.

A beautifully planted promenade, called the Battery is the chosen promenade for the fashionable of New York, and here, as soon as the heat of the day is over, crowds of stylishly-dressed people walk up and down, or sit smoking or drinking, or, if more refined, listening to music or reading the newspapers.

I am agreeably surprised at the good garb of the negro and mulatto population.

June 25.—The present condition of the mercantile public of New York is disastrous. The papers every morning contain long lists of Houses which have stopped payment ; not a single Bank can pay its notes in specie ; silver and gold have disappeared entirely from circulation, all necessaries are bought and sold by small notes of one dollar to 6 cents, or 3d. English, issued by everybody and anybody. The dollar is about 4s. 3d.

I have met within the past fortnight several persons whom I know, and more who appear to know me. Two persons I have seen slinking about Wall Street absconded dishonourably from Leicester some time since.

Every contrivance is used to produce coolness, and at the corner of every street there are vendors of iced currant and strawberry water, at 2 cents a glass. Gentlemen walk about the public promenades in white linen or calico jackets, though in company with ladies.

On signboards Hirams, Calebs, and Anthonyms are very common. Justinian and Romulus Riggs I see opposite my boarding-house. Ichabod is also a common prefix. I have seen a few Jonathans, but not many.

July 4.—This is the anniversary of the Declaration of American Independence. I have been kept awake all last night by the firing of guns and pistols, and was thoroughly aroused at daybreak by the march of a body of troops, who passed with music, and banners, escorting some cannon to the Battery, where they immediately commenced firing. Ever since there has been an incessant explosion of cannon and musquetry. The whole city has turned out. The American Flag is flying from all steeples and public buildings. Eagles and similar devices are displayed wherever there is room.

I saw the colours of every country—Russian, Italian, French, Dutch, and Dane, but not the flag of England. I presume, under the peculiar circumstances, the appearance of our flag would be misconstrued. But I felt it in a foreign country. While looking on devices which represented

America as trampling upon England, I thought it was a great misfortune to both countries that they had ever been enemies. I could not with pleasure participate in rejoicings which reminded me of my country's humiliation, though the event must ever be dear to the interests of humanity, to the lovers of Liberty and Justice.

To-night, whilst I am writing, the City is one blaze of fire, the air is redolent of "villainous saltpetre," there are many bonfires, but few transparencies or devices, or illuminations. It is a coarse rejoicing in the midst of fire, and smoke, and noise, an incessant blazing and roaring of rockets and musquetry and cannon.

July 5.—In the papers to-day are some half-dozen orations upon the Fourth of July, pompous, stilted, and inflated productions, where the run-away skirmishes of the Revolution and the rifle-won fights of the last War (1812-14)* are invested with the glories of a Marathon or Platea.

July 6.—The Commercial and Financial condition of this City is truly deplorable. There is scarcely a Merchant, an Importer, Dealer, Banker or Broker, who is not insolvent or likely to become so.

From political quarrels or other causes, duels in America of a most assassin-like character are very common. A great many windows in New York are filled with all kinds of knives and daggers and pistols.

A philosopher can have no doubt of republicanism as the best form of government, but, so far as the happiness of the people is concerned, the security of life, and property, and the free expression of opinion, I believe England has at present greatly the advantage of America.

But there is no ignorance in America. Every American has been educated, the schools are the property of all and accessible to all ; all can read and write at the least ; the shop boy discusses politics and governments with as much acumen as his employer, and the driver or pilot will borrow the newspaper of his fare, read it as readily, and comment

* Compare resentment at the Boers' use of barbed wire.

on it as fluently and as well. Everybody can converse well upon the laws and institutions of his country. (I mean every native American can do so ; I am not speaking of the host of dirty Irishmen who swarm in New York and decide the elections.) Everyone reads the newspapers—cabmen, boatmen, tapsters, oyster-women, and porters ; a drayman in the intervals of his labour buys a newspaper for one cent, sits down and reads it.

Newspapers swarm ; there are not less than 200 in the state of New York alone ! They are very cheap, the leading “New York” journals selling for 6 cents (3d. each), but many of the small ones sell for one cent only. The leading journals are nearly filled with advertisements. In the others the editorial matter is below mediocrity, consisting mainly of coarse, personal attacks on public men. The American press is dreadfully licentious, and its attacks on private character at times of popular excitement are disgraceful in the extreme, and tend more than anything else to lower the American in the eyes of Europe.

On the arrival of an English packet the papers are filled for two days with English or European news.

I am obliged to lay aside all my English clothes, and buy much lighter ones at three times the cost.

People seem very fond of ornament. Men wear a profusion of studs, brooches, chains, and rings, and carry canes with gold handles. Most well-dressed people have gold watches, everybody has a card of address, the women are pinched up in the last Parisian fashion with long waists and tight sleeves, terminating at the elbow ; their little articles of dress, such as fans, reticules, handkerchiefs, etc., are lavishly expensive. I have heard of merchants’ wives giving 100 dollars, *i.e.*, £24, for a single handkerchief. All ranks seem to have been making money very easily, and spending it very lightly. Women wear many ornaments, as chains, etc. The hair is mostly braided *a la Madonna* and bound up in a Greek wreath behind, not a hard shapeless knot ; the dress of girls, I mean very young ones, is very

tasteful. The hair is generally braided in long wreaths in the Italian style, or confined in a net of pearl or gold thread and looks very pretty. But I have been altogether disgusted with the pert, forward manners of those whom, in England, I should have called children—children of 12 or 13 with the airs and affectations of 20.

On walking along the Quays of New York near the shipping, I am struck by the foreign languages spoken. I could have thought myself at Marseilles or at Rotterdam. On board almost every ship there are some French, Dutch, or German. Very few native Americans go to sea as common sailors ; they would have to accept the wages which content a German or an Englishman, and they can do better at home.

As two sides of New York are surrounded by water vessels leave their moorings without any of the shouting, pulling, and hauling which is necessary to extricate a ship from the Docks of other countries ; and I have often seen a ship from Europe come in, with every sail set, and range close up to the wharf without lowering a boat or dropping an anchor.

All throughout America the Hotels are upon a most extensive and even magnificent scale. The great numbers of Americans who are always travelling for business or pleasure, the tide of Emigration, but more than all the undomestic manners of the people (many hundreds of whom in their own cities have no other homes) all combine to throng these Hotels. There are many Americans who have been born in an Hotel, have lived all their lives in one, and only on marriage have changed to a Boarding House.

At these Hotels the dining-table is frequently 100 feet long and the room large in proportion. The proprietor generally presides, the waiters take the dishes off the table and carve them at sideboards, and every dish is presented in succession to every guest, and there is always a great profusion of food. You may live in these Hotels, eating four meals a day and sleeping, for about 8s. English per diem.

Wine is very dear but you are not expected to take it, and comparatively few do so.

In an American Hotel you must expect very little attention. You are only one of a crowd, and every day multitudes are coming and going. The best way is to single out a particular waiter and give him a *douceur*, and then he will attend to you well. There is no demand or fee for the servants on leaving an American Hotel, but a gift is never rejected.

Almost all people in America eat in a hurried way, scarcely speaking during a meal ; and in a very short time (almost before an Englishman has finished his first plate) they begin to rise from the table ; not to go to business, as I at first supposed, but to adjoin to a magnificent bar room, there to drink spirits, chew tobacco, read the papers, and talk about dollars ! This hurried style of eating is the cause of a great deal of indigestion and dyspepsia, of which all Americans are victims.

*

July 18.—When I was in Boston I wished to hear Channing preach, but finding that I could not stay until Sunday, I plucked up heart and introduced myself to him as an English Traveller anxious to pay his respects to one of our first moralists. He is a little, old, withered man with a high forehead and an intellectual cast of countenance. His daughter was in the room with him. Although I called without introduction he was very polite, asked a few questions upon English politics, and English finance matters, and my impressions of America. I assured him the Bank of England would not stop payment, and, after staying a quarter of an hour, I rose and took my leave.

Massachusetts manufactures are chiefly coarse calicoes, sattinettes, and drills—all water power ; very few steam engines. The Woollen Manufactures are very small. There is a large consumption of Blankets for Indians, which are made here. Girls earn 12 to 14 shillings per week.

Almost every year new States are formed, thus the

territory of "Michigan" has just become the State of Michigan.

Elections in America are conducted by Ballot, but the electors are too numerous to be bribed and too independent to be coerced, and consequently they make no secret of for whom they vote, but carry the voting ticket openly in their hands. The *Loco foco* or extreme Democratic Party, are opposed to a correct registration of the voters, because the laxness favours their interests. The Merchant or Whig party say that in the election in New York, which took place yesterday, more than 600 emigrant Irish, who have not the most distant claim to vote, have not only polled but several have polled in five or six different wards, making a false declaration on each occasion !

*

July 19.—At first you can hardly believe that a tall church with a portico and spire, is all of wood ; and when you learn it, it seems a pity ! I have seen thousands of beautiful villas, with porches, verandahs, and sometimes arcades of columns and statues, all made of wood, and painted white, with bright green blinds. I understand wooden houses are much cooler in summer, and warmer in winter, than stone ones, but they seem strange mushroom creations.

For miles beyond New York the ground has been laid out in building lots, which have lately during the land mania, been bought and sold for absurd sums. Streets have been marked out ten miles from the present centre of the city—I did not go to the end, but I saw one post 366th Street. New York must have the population of London to reach so far. It is at present, they say, 250,000.

The fronts of American houses are not neat. There are no flowers. If there is a small railed space, it is full of docks and nettles, to which pigs have access. You never see a *whole* fence, and cows and pigs are feeding in the streets. In New York you see pigs in the best streets, and the magistrates will not enforce the bye-laws against them,

for the pigs belong to Irishmen who have votes, and such a magistrate would not be re-elected !

Militia titles are very common all over the Union. You are always hearing people addressed as Captain, Major, etc. The other day I heard a stage driver called Captain. You incessantly meet people who have filled some civil department for a time, and then relapsed into private life. I found I had one day been on the most amiable terms with the last Governor of the State of New York, and after conversing some time with a gentleman in our boarding house last night was told on his departure that he was the Attorney-General of the United States last year.

No man in America need starve. Let him travel Westward, and his labour will not only furnish him with food, but enable him in a very short time to buy land and become a farmer.

People have no anxiety for the morrow ! Boys of sixteen, with the most perfect confidence in their own resources, marry wives, migrate a thousand miles into the Wilderness, pitch their cabins, clear a patch of land, and subsist until their first crop is ready by their rifles, hunting in their own forest. I dislike the country, I dislike the people, their morals, and their manners, but were I a poor English labourer I would emigrate to America to-morrow !

There is an extreme laxity in the laws throughout America, with respect to enforcing payment of debts. In every State the laws are different, and there are so many facilities for evading payment, that legal proceedings are rarely had recourse to. There are no bankrupt laws. It is common for a debtor to pay some of his creditors and leave others unpaid ; and debts of preference are constantly spoken of and recognized, although they presuppose what in England the law stigmatizes as fraud and dishonesty. In the New England States the law is better, but in the South enforcing a debt is a two years process. There have been several attempts made to introduce a Bankrupt law in America, but as yet unsuccessfully ; and this quiet resistance

to the introduction of common fairness in mercantile law, seems to argue a low standard of commercial honesty.

*

Nothing pleases a foreigner more in America than the magnificent steamboats. Steamboat travelling in America commands unqualified admiration. America may be proud of her water communication. She has availed herself of her natural advantages, and made high-roads of her Lakes, rivers and seas. Her steamboats are of a size and propelled at a rate that astonishes any one who has only seen those of Europe ; the small vessels that navigate the Thames, the Clyde, or the Rhine, would almost hang at the taffrail of a Mississippi Steamer. I have sat down to dinner with 300 people in the cabin of one !

The accommodations in these vessels are excellent.

Drawing so little water and furnished with powerful engines, they attain a speed truly astonishing ; I have been in a steamboat called the *Swallow* from New York to Albany on the Hudson, 140 miles in 71 hours ! Some are reported to have steamed occasionally 25 miles an hour. Fifteen miles an hour is however a usual rate for these river boats. These large boats have generally two engines, and four furnaces and chimneys. They all burn wood, which at night produces a singular effect, a broad train of sparks streaming far to Leeward. The night boats sometimes contain two to 300 Berths, which are furnished with elegant draperies and silken hangings. Some of the Mississippi boats carry a thousand passengers !

Travelling by these vessels is extremely cheap. I have repeatedly gone 150 miles (from New York to Albany) for 2s. English, which includes a bed at night. Here, however, there was very great competition. Perhaps a fair average estimate of the expense of travelling by steamboat would be about 6s. per 100 miles.

*

Whilst the English have almost stood still contemplating with great complacency the two or three splendid railways

which they have made, the Americans have laid down many hundreds of miles of railways, as useful for all practical purposes as the "Liverpool and Manchester Line." Many circumstances conspire to assist the Americans in the construction of these roads, vast alluvial plains, sometimes presenting a dead level along the banks of a river, for a hundred miles together ; the great plenty of timber which often grows in profusion on the very track of the proposed line, and only requires felling ; and more than all, the cheapness of the land, which enables the projectors to buy it for a trifle, or in the majority of cases to get it for nothing !

The expense of these roads bears no proportion to their cost in England. Many of them have been finished for 5,000 dollars a mile. The very best of them made of English iron, and laid down on double lines have been completed for £6,000 a mile, which is only one-seventh the cost of the average of English Railways. There is certainly no unnecessary expense incurred in their construction. The line appears in places like a huge frame of Timber, laid on the ground, on which the rails are screwed ; the sleepers are not filled up with earth, and often in passing a marsh or a lagoon, the single line is barely wide enough for the train.

The engineers seem to have the "power" under better control than we have, and to be able to stop much sooner.* A train moving at 17 miles an hour, stopped in 40 yards.

The engine carries a sort of large shovel in front, which removes obstacles on the rails. Riding on the engine of a Washington train at night, I saw a cow lying on the rails. We were upon her at once and I expected a terrible concussion, instead of which the shovel scooped her up and carried her a few yards, when she fell off on the road side, and the train passed on scathless.

I took many opportunities of riding on the engines and talking to the drivers. Wood is burned in most of the engines

* The Americans did not know how to start or stop a train as well as the British drivers.—*Sir Josiah Stamp, Sept. 25, 1926.*

but others use anthracite coal. The cylinders of American engines are generally horizontal like our own, but I saw several where the cylinders were vertical.

There is no country where you can travel with such facility and cheapness as in America. There are already railways throughout all the New England States to every town of importance, and some thousand miles in progress in the South and West. In a few years you will be able to pass from the Gulf of Newfoundland to the Gulf of Mexico, from icebergs to orange groves in five days.

*

The late mania for speculation has revelled chiefly in land. There are extant a thousand plans of Cities which have no actual existence.

A speculator makes out the plan of a city with its streets, squares and avenues, quays and wharves, public buildings and monuments, and often a canal or railroad by way of addition. The streets are lotted, the houses numbered, and the squares called after Franklin and Washington. The city itself has some fine name, perhaps Troy or Antioch. This is engraved and forthwith advertised, and hung up in as many steamboats and hotels as the speculator's interest can command. All this time the city is a mere vision. Its very site is on the fork of some river in the far West, five hundred miles beyond civilization, probably under water or surrounded by dense forests and impassable swamps. Emigrants have been repeatedly defrauded of their money by transactions so extremely gross as hardly to be credited.

In New York not a night passes without the great city bell tolling for fires. They are promptly extinguished. There are more than fifty engines in New York, manned by fifteen hundred firemen, all young men, who enrol themselves in these fire companies in exchange for the Militia service, which the law allows in most of the States. The brigade men hurry to a fire bearing lanterns, red, blue or green. They are under perfect command and well disciplined. The officers shout their orders through

speaking-trumpets, the street is cleared, the fire plugs opened and the fire often out in a few minutes.

The rate of fire insurance is very high in New York, thirteen or fourteen times as much as we pay in England. The Insurance Offices are very suspicious, and after a fire the amount to be recovered is the constant subject of litigation. It seems quite usual for the party who is "burnt out" to expect to make "a good thing" of the circumstance !

At present nearly every Bank in America has stopped payment. Paper money passes current at a discount corresponding with the supposed likelihood of a bank soon resuming payments. In the meantime employers issue small notes for pence and pay their men with them ; hotels and shops of all kinds issue them, and give you them in change for larger notes. Such is the vast number of Banks which have failed that long printed lists (which are daily issued and are in everybody's hands) give you the names of the failed Banks in alphabetical order, and on the margin of the list is marked the discount at which the notes of each are current. If you tender a five dollar note for payment this list is produced at once, and the value of your note ascertained.

*

July 20.—A common mode of selling imported goods is by auction as at London or Liverpool ; but the sales have more of a private character than those of the East India Company, or the other large public companies in London. Some of the large Auction Houses are the most wealthy and respectable in New York and the Auctioneer is frequently a partner. He takes a very short time to each lot, proceeding rapidly, never pausing save for breath, and interspersing his biddings with observations in a very ludicrous fashion, thus :

"Now, Gentlemen, lot number 44, 2,055 yards black Lowell Satinett, what is bid ? Will nobody give me a bid ? A bid if you please, Gentlemen, 20 cents a yard ! Thank

you sir ! 20 cents ! 20—20—21—22—23—24—25—26—26 and a half ! 27—28—29—30—30 and a half, thank you, sir ! 30 and a half, and a half, Gentlemen, 30 and a half, 31, thank you, 31 and a half. Now, Gentlemen, time is precious, 31 and a half, don't make a noise, and a half, and a half, and a half, I can't hear myself speak, 31 and a half, 31 and a half, send out that woman, and a half ! What does she do there ? And drive out all those boys, 31 and a half, 32 thank you, 32 and a half, one of those boys has a dog with him, 32, give that dog a kick, and a half, and a half, can't hear myself speak, 32 and a half ! Will nobody give that dog a few kicks ? 32 and a half, and a half, Gentlemen, this is a real bargain, and a half, I know some merchants, 32 and a half, Gentlemen, who would give anything, and a half, for these goods, 32, Gentlemen, and a half, it is a shame, and a half, last time, and a half, Gentlemen, once, twice ! gone ! Now, Gentlemen, Lot number 45 ! ”

*

I have sailed on many rivers both in Europe and America and think the Hudson superior in natural scenery to them all.

On board, on my route towards Niagara, was a leading abolitionist of New York, a Quaker, who was going 200 miles to defend a runaway slave.

At Albany begins the great Erie canal, connecting the Hudson with Lake Erie, 300 miles, and with more than 100 locks. The canal is narrow, the locks being only 9 feet wide. The boats or packets for the conveyance of passengers will accommodate 40 people in the cabin. A boat is towed by three horses in a line, the driver sitting on the hindermost horse, and driving the others with whip and rein ; they trot along at the rate of seven miles an hour, but the stoppages are long and frequent, and the aggregate rate of the travelling is not more than five miles an hour.

I went by railroad from Albany to Utica, 90 miles, which occupied six hours. At Utica I took the mail-stage for Buffalo, about 200 miles.

It is not necessary in American travelling to make all those previous enquiries and arrangements which we are compelled to do in Europe. There is so much general intelligence and such an aptitude for locomotion amongst the Americans that almost anyone can give you all the information you require, as to the best mode of proceeding.

The stage I travelled by carried the mail bags, and did not average more than five miles an hour. The horses are active, the drivers are generally civil and conversible, and will stop for an hour at any place for your accommodation ; but the roads, they are horrible !

No language is sufficiently abusive to apply to them, often made of nothing but trunks of trees laid across the track, sometimes more than a foot apart and with no earth between them, across which you bump and jolt for miles together. Then you enter a swamp and the horses plunge up to their bellies amongst black mud and bull frogs. Then you drive into a rut like a chasm, and when you have been tugged out again find that a spring is broken. The driver goes to the fence, plucks out a stake, thrusts it under the body of the carriage, secured with a bit of string, and you bump along to the next station, where the mischief is soon repaired.

The drivers seldom drive more than one stage, bringing and taking away their horses, which I understand are mostly their own property. They never ask you for anything. There is no guard to the mail ; each successive driver takes the bags from his predecessor. At all small intermediate places a "way-bag" is thrown down to the postmaster, who shakes out the contents, looks them over, selects such as belong to him, then puts in what he may have, and hands it again to the driver. It appeared a very simple and primitive plan, but I understand letters seldom miscarry !

I passed a great many intermediate places. New towns in America are all alike ; all built of wood ; two or three hotels, a church, a post office, and a host of rambling,

scrambling log and shingle cabins ; the streets unpaved, often full of grass, and pigs and horses feeding therein ; yet each one of these new towns is full grown in its municipal institutions ; and has generally one or more newspapers.

After riding 48 hours I began to feel my bones dislocated ; at last, 52 hours after leaving New York, after emerging from an interminable forest, Lake Erie burst on my view. We found in Buffalo a handsome well-built wooden town with 15,000 inhabitants.

At Niagara I was induced to go underneath the falls to the very middle of the river ; in coming out I encountered Captain Marryat.

*

I left the falls of Niagara on the Canada side and embarked on Lake Ontario in a splendid steamboat called the *Great Britain*, an English boat with the British flag at the gaff, a most welcome sight in contrast to the continually recurring stars and stripes, and it gladdened my heart to hear a military band on board playing "God save the King." (I have often tried to analyse this feeling which is rather an unworthy one, and which an Englishman ought not to feel towards a people speaking the same language, and claiming the same ancestry as himself, but it is nevertheless a feeling that strengthens with his stay in America, in spite of good sense or philosophy.)

There was a high wind and a heavy sea dashing over the decks of our tall ship, and our passengers were mostly sick in spite of its being freshwater. The towns on the Canada side appear as if they had been built longer than those on the American side. They are mostly of stone, while the latter are of wood. At a first glance the population looks more quiet and less scheming than the American, the habitations are neater and more like English houses, and there is a greater air of comfort, the hotels are conducted more after the English fashion, the country is more carefully enclosed, but there lacks altogether the vigorous energy and determination to "go ahead" which you see on the increase.

I agreed to descend the rapids in a *batteau* loaded with flour, and guided by four French or Canadian Boatmen. The *batteau*, after a little rowing soon got into the mid-current and we commenced what seemed to me a headlong and dangerous descent down the rapids, among rocks and whirlpools and foam, at an incredible speed. I frequently thought the boat must have struck, but no accident occurred, and in 16 miles we came to smooth water.

Here we found the steamboat for Montreal disabled, and learned that the best way of progressing was by stage along the north bank of the river. I accordingly joined a party of six, and we set out for Montreal, going the whole distance, sixty miles, with the same horses, and along a road or rather track, which it exceeds the power of language to abuse sufficiently. Sometimes we travelled for miles over the trunks of trees laid across, called "corduroy roads" and sometimes laboured through a succession of swamps and deep holes. I walked the greater part of the journey which occupied nearly two days.

Our road lay on the North bank of the St. Lawrence through majestic pine forests. Nothing can exceed the grandeur of these woods in their stern and giant magnificence, and their solemn and primeval stillness. The ruined trunks of fallen and decayed trees are strewed around. In some places the light can hardly penetrate through the dense canopy of leaves which is matted above your head at the height of 100 feet, the boles of the trees rising up, tall, straight, and branchless, like the pillars of a temple.

Montreal's population is 30,000, of whom two-thirds are French, but the only placards I saw in French were a few notices of mantraps—penalties for trespass, and rewards for detection. Montreal is not lighted with gas.

The English of Montreal are good-looking, the women tolerably handsome. The Frenchmen are small of stature, and the women plain and hard featured.

*

I went to see a large Indian village called Caunawaga,

containing the remains of the once powerful tribe of the Iroquois, or "Six Nations." Four Indians with blankets, moccassins, and ornamented leggings, paddled me across in a canoe or *pirogue* made out of the trunk of a tree. On landing I saw about 200 canoes drawn up on the beach, some made of birch bark, but the greater number hollowed out of the trunk of a tree. Some of them large enough to carry twenty men, several swarthy half-naked children were sitting in these canoes at play, or paddling up and down the river. I was surprised to see their complexions so very dark, the more especially as so many of them (indeed the larger proportion) are half-breeds. As I walked in to the village many old men and women came to the doors of the cabins to look at me, the women or "Squaws" were mostly wrapped up in dark coloured blankets, with nothing visible except a pair of dark wild eyes, and a few locks of hair, black and coarse as horse hair. Their legs were gaily ornamented with leggings and moccassins, covered with beads and porcupine quills; I tried to speak to them both in French and English but could not find one who spoke, or who would speak, anything save "Iroquois" which is an assemblage of the most uncouth guttural sounds imaginable. Many of the Squaws lay on the ground wrapped up in their blankets, and I thought them asleep until I encountered the glaring of their eyes. Some of the old women were the most dreadful-looking hags I ever saw in my life, realizing all the loathsomeness of the Beldames of fairy tales. The look of the children was most savage and untamed. They were almost naked, very swart, and the long black hair of the girls fell down to their waists. Some of the women had slits in the nose and lips filled with rings and other ornaments. They glide about in their noiseless mocassins like spectres, wrapped up in the eternal blanket. They adjust it with the air that a Spanish Hidalgo would adjust his mantle, and there is a sort of quiet, impassive, savage dignity, that would be grand if it were not ludicrous; a half-breed who spoke French took me at my request to the

lodge of the Chief, to whom I gave a dollar, and his Squaw sold me two pairs of moccassins of her own manufacture for another dollar. I was afterwards informed that they would both be dead drunk for three days, on the strength of my liberality.

I came near a group of young girls who were darting arrows at each other with great accuracy. Some of them were gracefully formed and two or three were very fair, not much darker than the gypsies of England. On my approach they all ran away.

Of this tribe there are now about 1,200 ; of the Oneidas about 1,200, of the Tuscaroras about 200. The Oneidas possess the whole of Oneida country in the State of New York. The tribes of Cherokees are much civilized, and are beginning to be lost in the American population.

The Florida Indians are still in arms and will be slowly exterminated. The war began by an attempt of the planters to reclaim the negresses who had escaped and taken refuge with these Indians, and borne them children. Not content with seizing the mothers, the planters, according to the laws of the slave states claimed the children also—and this has exasperated the Indians beyond endurance. They have found a temporary refuge in their swamps and forests, but must soon succumb or be destroyed.

*

I am struck at the assumption of attention to women—they are never called “ women ” always “ ladies,” the term woman meaning a negress or mulatto. Men give up their seats to Ladies in public places more than we do. You see notices in steamboats, “ Gentlemen are requested not to sit down at dinner until the Ladies are seated,” or “ Gentlemen not to go into the Ladies’ Cabin without permission.” Ladies will not take the arm of a gentleman in the street unless affianced or related to him. It is considered a mark of great familiarity !

The streets of all American cities have never been compressed by walls or fortifications, with the exception of

a few narrow streets in the old parts of New York and Boston. Streets have a magnificent width. In many cases the railways enter the streets and are prolonged into the heart of the cities. The engines are detached at the entrance of the town and horses are put to the carriages, each horse drawing one or more carriages, and thus the passengers are brought into the centre of the city.

There always seems to me a great prodigality of food at Boarding house and Hotel tables. Food is carved carelessly, so as to be much wasted. A fowl or a goose is taken by a guest who cuts off the flesh on both sides the breast, then eats a mouthful and sends his plate away. An American breakfast is a perfect curiosity in its profusion.

Smoking is a universal habit amongst men, the cigar is in everybody's mouth, but this is not so bad as the habit of chewing tobacco, which is very common. This necessitates a constant spitting, which disgusting operation is carried on regardless of time or place. Carpets are spoiled in private houses, grates and stoves disfigured, and the "uncarpeted" floors (uncarpeted on this very account) of Hotels, and bar-rooms, and steamers' cabins, are covered with a filthy scum. People at table d'hotes sitting between two ladies turn round deliberately to spit on the floor, or will even spit across the table into the fire.

Another evil feature is the incessant drinking of spirits. I have seen a young man in a journey of eight hours drink nearly twenty tumblers of brandy and water. There being little or no duty on spirits, and no licensing of dealers, they are sold everywhere, and for almost nothing, and the Irish emigrant revels in whiskey until he dies of delirium-tremens !

A string of long-springed omnibuses are always going up and down the principal thoroughfares of New York, and bouncing and jolting over the very disgraceful pavements. One ride, long or short, costs $12\frac{1}{2}$ cents or 6d. English, but if you like to buy a dollar's worth of tickets, you can get them for 4d. each. The omnibus cads sell them to

you. They do not stand on a step as in London, but loll inside. As a class they seemed to me very impudent and careless.

There are several Theatres in New York, the two best are the Park and the Bowery. I saw Miss E. Tree performing "Ion," the audience in point of appearance much the same as an English one, but quite unable to appreciate the poetry. Those passages which in London are received with applause here excited none whatever. American actors as a whole are below mediocrity. As in France and Italy no females are allowed in the pit. At the Bowery Theatre I saw a great rude fellow plant himself in a box in front of several ladies, and pull off his coat. Cries of "Shame" and "Put on your coat" followed and he then put on both his coat and hat!

There are three or four public gardens in New York, *à la* Vauxhall, with music, fireworks, and illuminated promenades. I saw a conjurer who pleased a large audience very much. They seem to me to have a low standard of excellence; very stale tricks and staler jokes elicited unbounded applause.

*

When I left New York for Philadelphia—the population is 20,000—by a steamboat, I was gratified by seeing the dexterity with which the passengers and goods were transferred from the steamboat to the railway. All the goods had been placed in large square boxes with a huge ring at the top. These boxes were immediately seized by a crane and hoisted on shore, and lowered upon trucks. In five minutes the passengers had walked from the ship's deck and taken their seats in the train, and we were in motion certainly in less than ten minutes. I went to a large Hotel called the Mansion House.

The extreme regularity of the streets is rather annoying, you have no landmarks.

Pennsylvania is not a Slave State, but there is the same strong animus against the dark-coloured race as in the

Slave States. In the Slave States negroes are frequently treated with great care. They are visited and consoled by the ladies of the house when ill, and a provision for them in old age is obligatory on their owners. The children of their white lord are seen playing with the children of the slaves, almost on a footing of equality, and apparently unconscious of the fearful change that awaits their future years ; but in New York, Philadelphia, and indeed all over the Free States, the negroes are treated with great contumely and insolence.

I went on board a very large ship of war, the *Pennsylvania* of 140 guns, the "largest ship in the world," say the papers, and equal to any two ships that England could send against America. It is distressing to hear people exalting themselves so much about a ship, and the probable effect of its broadsides on an English vessel. She appears a splendid vessel, is built of "live" or evergreen oak and floats in the broad river like a huge castle !

I went to see the grave of Benjamin Franklin. It is marked merely by a plain slab of stone, in a corner of a very small and quiet burying ground. No monument ! no urn ! no token that should mark a nation's gratitude !

*

At Baltimore in Maryland I found the waiters all slaves. One man, almost as white as myself, told me he was worth twelve hundred dollars ! It is quite a common thing for slaves to assume importance amongst their fellows, in proportion to the price at which they have been sold, or assessed.

The vast streets and squares of Washington are adapted for half a million of inhabitants, but there are not more than 17,000. There is not more than one finished street. The wide streets are unpaved and grass grown. Solitary houses stand here and there marking the situation of the squares, and the names of the streets are painted on fingerposts, for lack of buildings, the whole place reminding you of a speculation.

The waiters at the Hotels are all slaves. A young man who waited on me at dinner said that he and ten others belonged to a Mr. Hiram. He (the slave) was worth 1,000 dollars and he believed his master reaped an excellent income from the hire of his negroes. They were all employed in the hotel, and as far as I could judge from a great deal of uproarious mirth, seemed contented and happy enough !

I hired a carriage and drove 17 miles, through pleasant scenery and deep woods, to see Mount Vernon, a large country house with a verandah all round. It is in a dilapidated and unkept state. The tomb of Washington is about 200 yards from the house, a small space 12 feet square, surrounded by an iron railing, but not well kept. Some pigs were prowling around and thrusting their noses between the bars to snatch the long grass that grew within the railing, and an ugly negress, the ugliest I ever saw, teased me incessantly to give her something ; upon the whole I felt very differently to what I had expected to feel beside the tomb of Washington.

It was during the journey to Mount Vernon that I first saw gangs of rural or field slaves at work. I had hitherto seen only town slaves, generally mulattoes, sometimes almost white, and generally acting as waiters, porters, or coachmen. They appeared so smart, so comfortable, and contented, that I had begun to think slave owners were a much abused race. But the appearance of these field negroes at once undeceived me. They were dressed in coarse, scantily blue frocks, with coloured handkerchiefs bound round their woolly heads. I felt at first compunctions in questioning these slaves about their condition, but it is a superfluous feeling. They have such a coarse animal expression in their faces, narrow foreheads, thick blubber lips, and projecting, mastiff-like jaws. After looking at them you are not surprised at the perfect apathy in which their minds seem to be buried, and the indifference they seem to feel. I had only two opportunities of speaking to field

negroes for the overlookers are jealous of travellers, lest they should be abolition agents.

*

A very favourite topic of conversation with American ladies is the merit of preachers. At the earnest wish of some of the ladies in my boarding-house, I went to a Baptist Chapel or Church to hear a celebrated preacher. I never was so provoked with a man before. He was a coarse, vulgar, low-minded fellow, a hypocrite I felt sure. He said the religion of Christ was a "right-up-and-down perpendicular religion," and he canted about "grace" and "the atonement" every now and then, turned round, to spit on the floor of the pulpit. The Church was elegant, the pulpit carved, and there were supporting pillars hung with drapery. The preacher wore a black silk gown. He is paid by a collection made after every service.

*

Went on board the *Oxford*, Captain Rathbone, to return to England. It seemed a weary way to look forward to, 1,000 leagues of sea. There was a great deal of trouble with some Irishmen who had concealed themselves on board, intending to come out when the ship was fairly away. They were, however, discovered, soundly beaten, and sent ashore.

On the seventh day out we had a heavy gale from the South West, which increased until we were driving before it with only a small patch of sail on the foremast. The ship rolled frightfully, dipping her yards into the water on each side.

Last night we were all awoke from sleep by a terrible shock. Throwing on some clothes, I ran on deck. There was just light enough to see a ship alongside, plunging up and down, for the sea was high. The rigging was interlocked with ours, and broken spars and booms were snapping, and thundering down on the deck, and a crowd of people were screaming and rushing, and tumbling over the bulwarks

on to our ship. At first I thought we were beset by a pirate, on account of the "million of dollars" we had on board, but I was made easy on that point by observing that the strangers were mostly undressed, and a great many of them women. We had run foul of the ship *Sophia*, an emigrant German vessel from Bremen. Her passengers and crew thought her sinking, and all rushed on board our ship. Several lives were lost. I saw one woman in a state of bewilderment take three children in her arms and in a vain essay to step across, fall between the two vessels, where the wreck of the *Sophia* "foremast" was grinding and crushing. Our captain soon got the vessels asunder, sent some of our crew on board to examine, and finding that no damage was done, the German crew were reassured and went on board in the morning. We put the German passengers (350) on board by boats, and went on our way. We had torn our sails and lost a few spars, but the *Sophia* had suffered much more !

*

There has come on a tremendous gale. We lay to under bare poles and could not go to sleep for the awful confusion of the sea and sky.

Calm again next day.

We are upon the whole very sociable. Some of the passengers understand music, and there is a violin and flute among the steerage passengers, which we have occasionally invited into the cabin. Last night we called in the cook, who is a stalwart negro, understanding he could sing, and to my exceeding surprise he gave us a song of love and chivalry with a very good voice and very tolerable execution !

Sometimes I climbed the rigging, and once mounted as high as the cross-trees, where I sat more than an hour in seeming admiration of the sea and sky, but really pondering how to get down.

For the last four days we have had a steady wind which has enabled the captain to set everything, and the ship has

actually walked through the water, bringing us nearly 1,000 miles in four days.

The captain has pointed out two ships of war, conspicuous like birds of prey by their large wing-like sails.

*

At day-break we heard the joyful cry of "Land ho!" and saw the promontory of Cape Clear looming through the mist.

Next day we stepped ashore after a voyage of 21 days.

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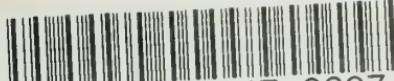
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